

**SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' FAMILY STRESS AND  
THEIR HUMAN RELATIONS AT SCHOOL**

by

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## ABSTRACT

The concept of family-work spill over has led to an increased interest in organizations developing family friendly strategies and policies to accommodate their employees. There has been a marked increase in the need for reducing the influence of family matters on work performance. One element to consider is that the staff in managerial positions has to motivate other staff to achieve the goals of the institution.

The purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between the family stress experienced by school principals in South Africa and their professional interpersonal relationships in the school domain. The literature review reveals several fundamental concepts such as educational leadership, human relations, stress and family stress. Furthermore, different dimensions of family stress are listed in the different instruments available for measurement. An empirical investigation followed the literature review. It started off with a pilot study, which was followed by a comprehensive empirical study among the school principals of the Metro Central Educational District of the Western Cape Department of Education in 2014. The empirical study revealed that the “acute/chronic” class of stressors does influence the human relationships of some school principals in the school domain.

This value of this study lies in the new information it offers on the relationship between family experiences and the work performance of school principals, since no formally published study could be found that addresses the influence of family matters on human relations of school principals. However, there are numerous studies available on the spill over of work experiences to the relationships at home.

**Keywords:** Family-Work Spillover, Human Relations, Educational Leadership, Family Stress, Principalship

## **OPSOMMING**

Die konsep van gesin-werk oorsvloei het gelei tot hernude belangstelling in organisasies se pogings om gesinsvriendelike strategieë en beleide in plek te kry om hulle werknemers te akkommodeer. Daar is 'n merkbare toename in die behoefte aan die vermindering van die invloed van gesinssake op werksuitlette. Een bykomende saak om te oorweeg is dat die personeel in bestuursposisies ander personeel moet motiveer om die doelwitte van die instelling te bereik.

Die doel van hierdie studie is om die verwantskap tussen die gesinsstres wat skoolhoofde in Suid-Afrika ervaar en hulle professionele interpersoonlike verhoudings by die skool te ondersoek. Die literatuur spreek verskeie grondliggende konsepte soos opvoedkundige leierskap, menseverhoudinge, stres en gesinsstres aan. Daar word verder verskillende soorte gesinsstres geïdentifiseer en daar verskillende instrumente beskikbaar om dit te meet. 'n Empiriese ondersoek het die literatuuroorsig gevolg. Dit het begin met 'n loodsstudie, wat gevolg is deur 'n omvattende empiriese studie onder die skoolhoofde van die Metro Sentrale Onderwysdistrik van die Wes-Kaapse Departement van Onderwys in 2014. Die empiriese studie het getoon dat die “akute/chroniese” klas van stressore die menseverhoudinge van sommige van die skoolhoofde by hulle werksplekke beïnvloed het.

Die waarde van hierdie studie lê daarin dat dit nuwe inligting verskaf oor die verwantskap tussen gesinsevaringe en die werksuitlette van skoolhoofde aangesien daar nog nie voorheen formele studies gepubliseer is wat die invloed van gesinssake op die werksuitlette van skoolhoofde aanspreek nie. Daar is egter verskeie studies beskikbaar oor die oorsvloei van werkservaringe na die verhoudinge tuis.

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## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

FILE	Family Inventory of Life Events
MCED	Metro Central Educational District
SU	Stellenbosch University
WCED	Western Cape Education Department
DM	District Manager
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

The rise or fall of a civilisation is inextricably bound to the educational philosophy of its men and women, who themselves are products of that civilisation. Some scholars describe *education* as a dynamic human activity that involves the acquisition of the knowledge that influences the physical, mental, emotional, social and ethical development of individuals and their ability to practice these skills in a proper and professional manner during the course of their lives (Bates & Lewis, 2009; Crow & Crow, 1960; Warnock, 1979). Similar to a cell in the human body, “school” is the most basic functional unit in education. It fulfils a particular function with regard to various social, economic, vocational and other demands (Fourie, Oberholzer and Verster, 1992). The school structure includes a number of standard roles such as learners, teachers, administrative personnel and supervisory staff (Theron, 2002).

One of the most important elements of the school is obviously the *principal*. According to the Occupational Outlook Handbook of the U.S. Department of Labour, principals perform some critical functions, such as developing academic programmes, monitoring students’ educational progress, training and motivating teachers and other staff, managing career counselling and other student services, administering recordkeeping, preparing budgets, and many other duties. In addition to the functions mentioned above they are responsible for providing instructional leadership, managing the day-to-day activities, supervising deputies, supporting staff, teachers, counsellors, librarians, coaches, and other employees. They also handle interactions with parents, prospective and current students, employers, and the community.

One portion of the available literature on work-family relationships focuses on the means through which behaviours, attitudes, and experiences in one environment spill over to or affect other environments that an individual enter on a daily basis. There is continuous change within any organisation, as well as in individuals’ lives. So if either the family or work life of an employee is disturbed, or the person has conflicting roles to perform, the performance of the employee is ultimately affected. Negative spill over or family-work conflict arises when meeting family demands creates disturbance in a person’s work life (Aslam, Shumaila, Azhar and

Sadaqat, 2011). This kind of stress has been associated with adverse outcomes including hypertension, fatigue, depression, poor physical health, psychological distress (Dilworth, 2004; Greenglass 2000), absenteeism from work, and poor job performance (Nomaguchi, 2012). However, positive spill over/enrichment between family and work environments has also been reported. This promotes better functioning across domains. Several aspects of family life can act as a resource. Family life may offer fulfilment, respect, and energy that can be reinvested in work (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

## **1.2 Purpose of the study**

The goal of this dissertation is to examine the association between the human relations of school principals and the family stress that they are exposed to. The inspiration for this study emerged from my observation on the two principals who I worked with in the first two years of my professional career. According to my observation on them, as one had a very stable home environment, the other one did show some signs of a stressful home. As the former established positive relations, the later failed to have them. Guided by the available recent research on family-work spill over of other professions such as managers, teachers and medical doctors as will be mentioned in chapter two, this study investigates one primary research question.

### Research question:

What is the possible influence of family stress at home on the human relations of school principals when they enter the school domain?

This primary research question can be better addressed by investigating five sub-questions that result from the problem at hand.

### Sub-questions:

- What is the meaning of “human relations”?
- What is meant by “family stress”?
- What is the importance of maintaining positive human relations in the school environment?
- What does “family-work spill over” refer to?

- How do gender differences affect the family-work spill over of principals?

This study contributes to the existing literature by investigating negative family-work spill over that influences specifically school principals. Prior research on negative spill over from home to work has not been applied to school principals with reference to their human relations dimension. Scholars like Dilworth (2004) found decreased satisfaction with family life to be one of the strongest predictors of negative family-to-work spill over. As such, the findings of this research will benefit principals in that increased family life satisfaction that stems from decreasing family stress will influence the quality of principals' human relations at school, which in turn has direct effects on staff morale and indirect effects on quality of education or level of learners' achievement at schools (Edgerson & Kritsonis, 2006; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1986; Kowalski, 2010; Leithwood, 1994). In addition, not only the school principals, but also the different employees will be able to make use of the outcomes of the research.

### 1.3 Hypothesis

Based on the above, the hypothesis is that the more family stress a principal experiences at home, the poorer human relations they exhibit at school.

### 1.4 Literature review

School leadership has become a priority in education policy agendas worldwide. It plays a key role in improving school outcomes because it influences the motivation and capacities of teachers, as well as the school climate and environment. As the key intermediary function between the classroom, the school and the education system as a whole, effective school leadership is essential to improve the efficiency and equity of schooling. There is increasing evidence that within each individual school, leadership can contribute to improving student learning by shaping the conditions and climate in which teaching and learning occur. A large body of research on the effectiveness of schools and school improvement from many countries and school contexts has consistently highlighted the pivotal role of school leadership in making schools more effective (Pont, Nusche, and Moorman, 2008).

### **1.4.1 The principal as a leader**

The principal is the key person who must demonstrate the ability to inspire people to work together, who has to establish an environment of mutual trust, be kind and tactful, and who has understanding human nature (Crow & Crow, 1960). The principal has to change the school's climate to that of collaboration and support for the sake of reaching the educational goals of schools (Kowalski, 2010). These are qualities that are more probable in the context of positive relationships. Citing from the works of different scholars, Eyal and Roth (2011) state that school leadership indirectly affects student outcomes such as student attendance, achievement, graduation, and university enrolment by creating the conditions that support teachers' ability to teach and students' ability to learn.

Practicing the correct behaviours in the human relations domain is a very important leadership skill. Kowalski (2010) suggests that internal relationships between staff have a mediating effect on student learning. Principals influence those conditions in a school that are associated with student learning, such as setting clear and relevant learning goals, revamping negative school cultures, and establishing an environment of mutual trust and shared goals. However, the contribution is almost always mediated by other people, events, and organisational factors such as teacher commitment, instructional practices, or school culture (Leithwood, 1994).

Principals believe that the basis of a sound education is a "good" environment in the school. Their goal is to try to provide the kind of environment they believe is needed for a good education; primarily good relationships in the school and a happy staff. Ensuring a harmonious environment frequently becomes an end in itself for these principals, and meeting the perceived needs of staff is often what a harmonious environment means in practice (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1986). Poor relationships, regardless of their cause, have negative effect. A principal's ability to change a school's climate, however, is highly dependent on collaboration and support, qualities that are more probable in the context of positive relationships (Kowalski, 2010). Principals have the ability to improve teacher perceptions overall by simply attending to fundamental components inherent in quality relationships. As teachers begin to feel better about themselves and what their collective mission is as a result of significant interactions with their principal, they become more effective in the classroom (Edgerson & Kritsonis, 2006).



Effective and positive human relations among the members involved in the functioning of the organisation are essential for an organisation to function efficiently and productively, to reach its goals and objectives, and to realise its vision. If the concept of human relations is such an important facet of school administration as has been indicated above, we must be definitive about the term (Griffiths, 1956).

#### **1.4.2 Human relations**

The term human relations in its broadest sense covers all types of interactions among people; their conflicts, cooperative efforts, and group relationships. The study of human relations involves the study of *why* our beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours sometimes cause interpersonal conflict in our personal lives and in work-related situations (Reece & Brandt, 1993). According to Boykin (1955), human relations is a way of behaving, of acting or not acting toward human beings in terms of the ideals and value patterns of a democratic society. It is a way of responding to social situations and to the individuals and groups that produce these situations; the unity of interacting personalities bound together in an organised relationship in which the characteristic mode of the social interaction is determined not by racial or ethnic differences, interfaith conflicts, socio-economic disparities, and cultural and educational factors, but by respect for individual personality, and the dignity and worth of human beings.

Furthermore, Roethlisberger defines human relations skills as a person's capacity to communicate his feelings and ideas to others, to receive such communications from others, and to respond to their feelings and ideas in a fashion that promotes congenial participation in a common task (Griffiths, 1956).

A school principal must understand the content of human relations and achieve the skill necessary for successful human relations, as it is most pertinent to school administration. Most of a school principal's time is spent in face-to-face contact with members of the faculty, board of education members, parents and students (Griffiths, 1956). A survey of Martin and Willower (1981) on high school principals testifies to the importance of human relations for principles. The survey showed that high school principals spend 53.8 percent of their day in face-to face contact. In a different study involving 65 principals of elementary and high schools about the time principals use on different tasks, Horng, Klasik and Loeb (2009) classified the tasks

principals perform into seven groups. According to their findings, 61,99% of a principal's time is spent in interactions with other people.

At this point one must analyse the behavioural determinants of the human relations of principals at school. Family life is one of these determinants, and this study focuses on this one major source of life stress.

### **1.4.3 Conceptual analysis of family stress**

Setting an example as a leader does not end with the leadership, instructional and management roles of a principal. Does the staff get a chance to see him relaxed during the day, enjoying the job and slowing down the pace when necessary? What about how his private life influences his job performance? In all walks of life, if a manager comes to work unhappy and stressed out, it takes a tremendous amount of energy and psychological manipulation to reverse this disposition in order to function effectively for others and him- or herself. If such a person does not feel well, it is hard to help others while on the job. The better you feel, the better you will perform. A principal's personal level of health and well-being must be maintained to perform effectively on or off the job. One of the elements of this well-being is *psychological well-being*, which generates a positive level of energy that we expose when we are at work and in our personal lives. This positive energy may be due to a *happy family environment*, close and warm relationships with friends and peers, regular exercise, active social life or even a hobby (Robbins & Alvy, 1995).

### **1.4.4 Stress**

Stress has been defined in different ways over the years. Originally, it was conceived of as pressure from the environment, then as strain within the person and today it is regarded as the interaction between the situation and the individual. It is defined as the psychological and physical state that results when the resources of the individual are not sufficient to cope with the demands and pressures of the situation. Thus, stress is more likely in some situations than in others and in some individuals than in others. Stress can undermine a person's goal achievement, especially as one goes up in the hierarchy of workplaces and organisations (Michie, 2002).

The term *stress* is a derivative of the Middle English term *destresse*, which is further derived from the Latin word *stringere*, which means "to draw tight". After being first recognised by the Austrian-Hungarian endocrinologist Hans Selye in 1926, "stress" has been acknowledged by many different scientists in different areas. It is to some extent defined similarly in biology and psychology. First, using the term in a biological context, Selye defined stress as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand placed upon it." It typically describes the negative impact of some factors, called "stressors", on a person's psychological and physiological well-being.

*Stressors* are defined as agents, conditions or events that can be perceived as a threat to the well-being of the organism and are capable of provoking a stress response. According to Barling (1990), stressors are grouped as *chronic*, *acute* and *daily stressors*, which are distinguished on the basis of the duration of the stressor, the specificity of its time of onset and its likelihood of recurrence. The different kinds of stressors are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

There are three different approaches to defining stress that can be constructed as a model between stress and related factors. These are *response-based*, *stimulus-based* and *interactional models* of stress. The model used in this study to define stress is the *response-based* definition of stress. As shown below, Cox (1983) states that the response-based definition tends to be concerned with the specification of the particular response or pattern of responses, which may be taken as evidence that the person is, or has been, under pressure from a "disturbing" environment.

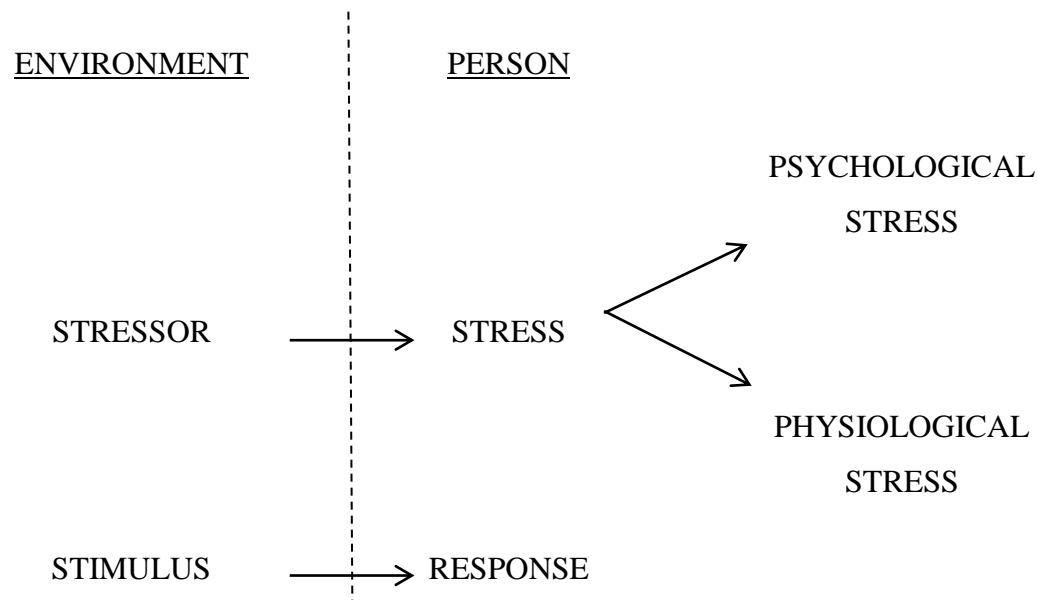


Figure 1.1: Cox's Response-based model

Stress is not always a bad thing. It is simply the body's response to changes that place taxing demands. Many professionals suggest that there is a difference between what we perceive as positive stress or *eustress*, and *distress*, which refers to negative stress. In daily life, we often use the term "stress" to describe negative situations. This leads many people to believe that all stress is bad for you, which is not true. This matter is also further expounded in Chapter 2.

### 1.4.5 Family

If the principal's behaviour matters, we have to understand what determines a principal's behaviour. An understanding of human behaviour at work begins with a review of the major forces that influence the worker (Reece & Brandt, 1993). Apart from internal environment of the organisation, external factors exert tremendous influence on employees to shape up or govern their responses to and behaviour in certain situations (Mathur & Gupta, 2012). More recently, scholars have recognised that the work context, organisational culture, formal role expectations, personal determinants and *family influences* affect people's behaviour in the work place (Kowalski, 2010; Reece & Brandt, 1993; Reece & Brandt, 2009).

*Family* can be defined as a sub-unit of a society that is composed of an interacting group of individuals. Families have a structure and a manner of organisation; members carry out functions and interact with their environment, like living organisms. Thus, they may suffer from stress like organisms do. Stressful events may arise within the family which directly affect all members and relationships between them and with other people outside of the family (Frude, 1990). Boss (2002), applying the systems theory to families, states that in families the collection of family members is not only a specific number of people, but also an aggregate of particular relationships and shared memories, successes, failures, and aspirations.

The family is a nexus of daily exchanges, both among household members and between these members and external settings, such as parents' places of work, children's schools, and other community institutions. Each day family members participate in semi-regular patterns of interaction with each other and with people and systems outside the family. In these interchanges, family members are affected by and affect others, sometimes in repeated ways.

Even when an external stressor makes a direct impact on one of the members of the family, this will have consequences for other members (Larson & Almeida, 1999).

#### **1.4.6 Family Stress**

Reuben Hill (1949) published a paper based on his work in the field of "family dismemberment" during and after World War II. As a social scientist working for the army, Hill was charged with assessing the impact of war casualties on American families.

Hill devised his ABC-X Theory of Family Stress, which will be further discussed in Chapter 2. This model is still used in family development research to describe the process through which families survive and endure over the span of the lives of the family members.

The interaction between (A) stressors, (B) family resources, and (C) perception of events as stressors is what defines a (X) crisis for any individual family. In other words, assuming that a family is aware of its resources, such as the number of family members bringing in pay checks, the emotional strength of the head of the family, the demonstrated wisdom of elder relations, the variety of family resources will disallow all but the most devastating events to be perceived as crises. If stressors are adequately dealt with by means of the family resources, the perception of the stressor will be that it is a minor thing. Other researchers expanded on Hill's work, as discussed in Chapter 2. If stressors are not dealt with adequately, it leads to family-work spill over.

#### **1.4.7 Family-work spill over**

People recognise that their own happiness is largely dependent on the behaviour and well-being of 'significant others' and on the quality of key relationships. However, they also acknowledge that these same relationships often provoke anger, anxiety and sadness. Home life is one of the significant external factors that influence the work domain. The emotional climate at home spills over to the work situation. Work life is not totally separate from home life, so that the emotional climate, be it positive or negative, in one domain can easily spill over from one role to another and affect the satisfaction and success in either of these domains. Irritations and conflict within the family frequently rouse people to intense anger, and many aspects of their family relationships may lead them to profound distress. Thus individuals recognise that their close

relationships are sources of happiness, comfort and joy, on the one hand, and frustration, tension, and distress on the other. The quality of a person's work is often related to the ability to cope with the stress created by family problems (Reece & Brandt, 2009; Friedman & Greenhaus 2000; Frude, 1990; Near, Rice & Hunt, 1980).

In recent studies, scholars researching work and family have come to refer this situation to as family-to-work spill over. Positively seen, it functions as *family-to-work enrichment*, negatively seen it becomes *family-to-work conflict*. Negative spill over is associated with feelings of *burnout, stress, job dissatisfaction, and a diminished sense of company loyalty* (Keene & Reynolds, 2005). Witt and Carlson (2006) conclude from their studies that high levels of family-to-work conflict may lead to lower job performance. For instance, having young or disabled children, which can potentially be a stressor in the family, is clearly associated with family-to-work conflict (Lewis, Kagan & Heaton, 2000; Stevens, Minnotte, Mannon, and Kiger, 2007; Hyde, Else-Quest, Goldsmith, Biesanz, 2004).

Although family-to-work conflict is a useful construct to explain part of the relationship between work and family, it does not explain the complex nature of the interaction in its entirety (Stevens *et al.*, 2007). The degree of support received from one's spouse (spousal support), the positive feelings arising from unpaid work done in the home (household rewards), the positive feelings arising as a result of parenting activities (parenting rewards), and how much help and support one obtains from family members (kin support), are all positively related to family-to-work facilitation (Doane, 2008).

#### **1.4.8 Gender differences in family-work spill over**

Males and females differ in how they respond to family stressors. Due to their different roles in the family, women's perceptions of their job performance suffer more than men's from family-to-work spill over. In their study based on the 1992 National Survey of the Changing Workforce in the USA, Keene and Reynolds (2005) report that of the women who participated in the survey, 42% reported making one or more adjustments, compared to 32% of men, and these adjustments are predictive of feeling distracted at work, less productive, and reduced work quality. In addition to this, married workers with children were more likely to report that their work suffered from family demands than childless workers. In a similar study, Wallace and Young (2008)

evaluated a sample of Canadian lawyers and found that fathers benefited from family resources and family-friendly benefits, but mothers did not. Moreover, mothers of school-aged children were less productive than non-mothers, whereas fathers of pre-schoolers were more productive than non-fathers.

## **1.5 Methodology**

The methodology applied in the study is specifically suited to gathering information and drawing conclusions about the relationship between principals' levels of family stress and their performance when looking at their human relations at school.

### **1.5.1 Data collection**

Data collection was conducted by using a questionnaire (see *Appendix 1*) adapted from two other questionnaires. It comprises two parts: estimating the family stress of principals, which is the independent variable, and human relations at school, which is the dependent variable.

The first survey is about estimating the family stress levels of principals and was adapted from Family Inventory of Life Events and Changes (FILE) by McCubbin, Patterson, and Wilson (1991).

The data for the dependent variable was collected using a questionnaire that was adapted from the following website:

[http://notebook.lausd.net/portal/page?\\_pageid=33,153965&\\_dad=ptl&\\_schema=PTL\\_EP](http://notebook.lausd.net/portal/page?_pageid=33,153965&_dad=ptl&_schema=PTL_EP)

### **1.5.2 Sample design**

Ideally one would have wanted to survey the principals of all the schools in Western Cape as a target population. However, it is usually impossible or even unfeasible to do this, and the researcher therefore has to settle for a sample. A sample is a portion of elements taken from a population that is considered to be representative of the population. Rescoe, (1975) cited by Sekaran and Bougie (2009), proposes the rule of thumb by stating that "Sample sizes larger than 30 and less than 500 are appropriate for most research". Keeping in mind these limitations and the usual occurrence of some invalid data, the sample size consisted of about 1 set of questionnaires per principal for a maximum of 30 schools.

The questionnaires were first approved by the study advisor, Prof. Jan Heystek at Stellenbosch University, and were subsequently sent to the Research Department of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) to be mailed to the selected schools. The assessment instruments included a clear assessment guideline. A deadline was followed. The data interpretation was performed with the guidance of the study advisor, Prof. Jan Heystek.

## **1.6 Contribution of the study**

The idea is that the findings of this research be used by provincial and national authorities to assess, evaluate and analyse the impact of family stressors on the psychological and physical well-being of school principals. The findings introduce the idea of increasing or strengthening the family satisfaction of principals by conducting family therapy sessions with their spouses/partners and/or their children. By doing so, one can increase the quality of their human relations, which will have direct effect on staff morale and an indirect effect on the quality of education or level of learner achievement at schools (Edgerson & Kritsonis, 2006; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1986; Kowalski, 2010; Leithwood, 1994). This study can result in the adoption of home friendly regulations and precautions that increase the level of support emanating from the family domain of school principals. In addition, the human relations skill of principals can be improved by offering some seminars or workshops on stress management methods to teach them how to minimise the spill over of family problems/conflicts to the work domain.

After this introductory chapter one, this dissertation is organized into four additional chapters. Chapter two offers a brief literature review on the leadership and relations which construct the backbone of this study to be definitive about them. Chapter three then turns to a detailed discussion of the methodology used in this study. Chapter four presents the results of the research as they relate to the research questions and finally, chapter five summarizes and discusses the findings of this study.



## **CHAPTER 2: LEADERSHIP AND RELATIONS**

### **2.1 Introduction**

As outlined in chapter one, the quality of principals' human relations at school has direct effects on staff morale and indirect effects on quality of education or level of learners' achievement at schools (Edgerson & Kritsonis, 2006; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1986; Kowalski, 2010; Leithwood, 1994). It has also been outlined in the previous chapter that family experiences are one of the determinants of principal's behaviour at workplace (Kowalski, 2010; Reece & Brandt, 1993; Reece & Brandt, 2009).

This chapter is going to address how positive interpersonal relationships favour the relationships between the leader and his/her followers. After mentioning critical the role of the principal as a leader, it emphasizes the importance of good human relations between the principal and the staff in the school environment. This chapter at the final stage describes the family stress as a factor which affects the positive human relations between the principal and the staff.

### **2.2 Educational leadership**

Education is defined as a set of planned processes that provide pupils with learning opportunities through teaching. More than just facilitating learning, education provides the welfare and stability of nations by presenting the idea of good citizenship, transmission of cultural values and norms to its members, promoting the well-being of the individuals by introducing the principles of self-discipline, equipping the individual with job skills, in doing so decreasing poverty, the crime-rate and unemployment among individuals etc. Therefore, when considering a broader perspective, education has always been one of the most important pillars of human civilizations and nations. Therefore, the organisation and administration of educational processes become one of the most vital responsibilities of local and national governments by producing effective and appropriate policies and strategies (Sergiovanni, 1991).

Bush (2012), citing from another scholar, says that the labels used to define this field have recently changed from educational management to educational leadership. Management and leadership are activities that a person has to perform in a position as head. Although these two concepts are integrated, they are different aspects of the functions of the person heading an

organization (Heystek, Nieman, Van Rooyen, Mosoge & Bipath, 2008), principal in our case. Successful leadership and management within principalship are directed toward the improvement of teaching and learning for students (Sergiovanni, 1991). The principal occupies an important position in the school building such that as the leader of a group of professional, certified teachers, and the coordinator of a cadre of classified personnel, the principal establishes important relationships with the staff within the context of educational leadership (Edgerson & Kritsonis, 2006). It is evident from the previous studies that teachers' performances are influenced by their perceptions of principals' behaviour (Larchick & Chance, 2004).

The following headings investigate how the above mentioned terms apply in the leadership of the principal.

### **2.3 The principal as a leader**

Leadership is described by Eyal and Roth (2011) as the ability to enlist, mobilise, and motivate others to apply their abilities and resources to a given cause. It illuminates the ways in which individuals influence others and persuade them to devote their utmost efforts to tasks that promote their goals. Besides the managerial aspect of school administration, principals are expected to be instructional leaders. Administrators have to demonstrate effective leadership at education institutions where human resources are effectively educated (Gulcan, 2010).

As mentioned in chapter one, the principal is key to what kind of environment the school becomes and how all the people in the institution work together. One important principle in psychology is that "everyone is different". Each person has a unique personality, perceptions, life experiences, different capabilities for learning and handling stress, and different attitudes and aspiration levels. Effective leaders view each member of staff as unique and as making an important contribution to the overall success of the organisation as a whole (Schütte & McLennan, 2001). It is found that neuroticism (anxiety, frustration, moodiness etc.), extraversion (outgoing, and sociable), conscientiousness (greater tenacity and persistence in completing tasks) (Ng, Ang and Chang, 2008), empowering followers, trust (Bartram & Casimir, 2007) are some leadership qualities which affect the leadership effectiveness. In studying "relational leadership", Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) they list collaboration, empathy, trust, and empowerment as the leadership practices which bind them to their followers.

Effective and positive human relations among the people involved in the functioning of an organisation are essential for the organisation to function efficiently and productively, for its ability to reach its goals and objectives, and for realising its vision. Human relations is central to school administration and, with consideration of the definition of human relations in chapter one, the discussion now turns to human relations as applied to principals specifically.

## **2.4 The importance of good human relations for principals as leaders**

The empowerment of employees is vital for organizational effectiveness (Bartram & Casimir, 2007). Seeing people as living human beings, rather than equating them with soulless resources, will change attitudes towards them (Heystek, Nieman, Van Rooyen, Mosoge & Bipath, 2008). Principals do not have to treat everyone alike to have good human relations. People are not alike, so they should not be always treated the same. The human relations skills needed by principals are not greatly different from those needed by leaders in business, industry, or other institutions. The teachers, students, and members of the general public that the principal must deal with have needs that are similar to the rest of humanity. They want a principal who makes them feel that they belong, that they are safe and worthwhile, who treat them fairly, who make them feel as if they make contributions, grow, achieve, are respected and form part of the group (Kimbrough & Burkett, 1990). Good human relations constitute a very important leadership skill. Recent scholars like Sass (1989) state that interpersonal communication skills, human relations, and leadership are the most important skills for educational leaders. A substantial body of research demonstrates the importance of positive interpersonal relationships for healthy human functioning. Through relationships, individuals receive instrumental help for tasks and challenges, emotional support in their daily lives, and companionship in shared activities. Conversely, the loss of relationship is a source of unhappiness and distress (Martin & Dawson, 2009). Game (2008) reports some evidence to support the role of supervisor behavior in precipitating events that lead to negative employee emotions. Bossert (1988) states four variables that contribute to a principal's effectiveness, namely setting instructional goals and requiring effective instructional practices, exercising leadership to accomplish goals, using effective management practices, and *exhibiting excellent human relations skills*.

Eyal and Roth (2011) state that school leadership affects student outcomes such as students' attendance, achievement, graduation, and university enrolment indirectly by creating the

conditions that support teachers' ability to teach. Students' learning is influenced more indirectly. Principals have the ability to improve teacher perceptions overall by simply attending to fundamental components inherent in quality relationships. As teachers begin to feel better about themselves and what their collective missions are as a result of significant interactions with their principals, they become more effective in the classroom (Edgerson & Kritsonis, 2006). According to Sergiovanni and Starratt (1988), applying Mayo's ideas in Hawthorne studies applied to schooling, teachers should be viewed as "whole persons" in their own right, rather than packages of needed energy, skills and aptitudes to be used by principals as stated in the idea of traditional scientific management. More recently according to Heystek, Nieman, Van Rooyen, Mosoge & Bipath (2008), teachers are living human beings rather than soulless resources which have to be consumed to reach the goals of the school.

In high-quality relationships, individuals not only learn that particular beliefs are useful for functioning in particular environments, but they actually internalize the beliefs valued by significant others. In this way, beliefs held by others become a part of the individual's own belief system. These internalized beliefs and values then have the potential to be transferred to other academic settings (Martin & Dawson, 2009). In human relations supervision teachers are provided with things enhance their morale and are involved in efforts to increase their job satisfaction so that they might be pliable in the hands of management, thus ensuring that good teaching will take place. According to Rawland 2008, teachers are the largest professional body in a school, have the most contact with students throughout the day, and influence the environment of the school greatly. When teachers feel positively about their position, feelings referred to as teacher morale, they have tremendous positive influence on the students and the school. The reverse is also true; when teachers have negative feelings about the school, they may negatively influence the students and the school. Teachers have the power as a group and as individuals to greatly influence a school's environment. It is very important for educational leaders to be aware of factors that affect teacher morale and how they may affect student achievement.

Principals, in turn, must be assisted with dealing with things that influence their functioning at school, especially related to human relations; otherwise they would not be able to provide the above guidance to teachers. Stress, as a major influence on principals, is addressed next.

## 2.5 Stress

The definition of stress discussed in Chapter 1 briefly mentions the history of the concept. It is worthwhile to pay a little bit more attention to Selye's initial identification of stress;

Hans Selye is the pioneer who is credited as the first to note the existence of human stress, describe its qualities, define the concept, and to give it an appropriate name (Sullivan, 1991). In 1925, when he was in his second year of medical studies, Selye observed that people suffering from a wide variety of physical disorders all seemed to have the same or similar symptoms. For example, many of these people reported decreased appetite, decreased muscular strength and endurance, and lowered levels of ambition or drive. Selye, unable to find a common disease or disorder to explain these behaviours, called this group of symptoms, the “syndrome of just being sick”. In addition, he found that these symptoms occurred whenever the organism or person needed to adapt to a changing internal or external environment.

This was the first observation and identification that eventually led to the term “stress”. At first, Selye defined stress as, *a non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it*.

Even this initial definition implies that not all stress is a result of "bad" things happening to us. Later, his “just being sick syndrome” evolved into the general adaptation syndrome, which he defined as the physiological processes and results of stress. Researchers after him refined the concept by identifying the different types of stress, as discussed below.

### 2.5.1 Types of stress

As briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, different classifications of stress have emerged as the concept was researched over the years. Driskel and Salas (1996) classify stress into acute stress and chronic stress. They define acute stress as sudden, novel, intense and of relatively short time stress response which disrupts goal-oriented behaviour, and requires a proximate response. Chronic stress refers to stress factors that are in the background of our everyday activities, and includes job stress, family stress, and the stress imposed by organisational requirements. Sometimes no one single source of chronic stress may seem that consequential, but the combined or cumulative effects of these stressors can lead to degraded performance over time.

Driskel and Salas (1996) also mention that environmental events can be perceived as either a challenge or as a threat, and that people respond differently to challenge-versus-threat situations. Cognitive, behavioural and social personal differences, such as hardiness, social support and the religious background of the person, the person's perception, evaluation and motor responses to the external stimuli may play a vital role in generating the stress response. For instance; the matric examinations at the end of the year can be perceived as a challenge for a subject teacher, but an annual visit for inspective purposes from the district can be a very big threat to a school administrator.

Furthermore, we may distinguish the current emphasis on acute stress from research on stressful life events - major events in a person's life such as death of a loved one, marriage, divorce, illness, job loss, moving, and so on. These events are unpleasant and can clearly impact performance, disrupt goal-oriented behaviour, and require an immediate response. They may overlap somewhat our conceptualisation of acute stressors. However, these events are relatively rare in a person's life, the impact is likely to be felt over weeks and months rather than require an immediate adaptive response (Driskel & Salas, 1996).

### **2.5.2 Fight or flight response**

Stress is a response to whatever threatens and disrupts the physical and emotional boundaries of the organism. Such a situation is capable of triggering a chain of reactions in order to protect it. This initial phase of the psychogenic stress response pattern is named the fight-or-flight response. In a biological sense, most of us show similar physiological responses, but on the other hand the type of personality and environmental conditions may change the psychological responses given to the stressors. Physiological responses against the stressors are non-specific, regardless of the type of stressor. Either a fight or flight reaction is triggered by the autonomous nervous system in order to prepare for muscular activity to survive the threat. The list below offers some physiological changes as a part of the fight or flight response:

- Increased heart rate
- Increased force of myocardial contraction
- Vasodilatation of deep muscle and coronary arteries
- Increased arterial blood pressure

- Increased serum glucose for energy production
- Increased respiration rate
- Increased respiration depth to inhale more oxygen
- Increased oxygen consumption for more ATP production
- Increased carbon dioxide production because of increased rate of cellular respiration
- Bronchodilation
- Increased skeletal muscle strength
- Pupillary dilation
- Perspiration
- Piloerection (erection of hair on the skin)
- Decreased gastric movement
- Decreased intestinal peristalsis
- Stimulation of adrenal medulla secretion (adrenalin hormone)

Once fight or flight response is triggered, the elevated internal organ activity and muscular contractions prepare the body for a physical response to the stressor. This automatically brings the body into the homeostatic conditions in which the body has to be.

### **2.5.3 General adaptation syndrome**

According to Baltas and Baltas (2010), the idea of homeostasis is defined as the tendency of the body to react in such a way that it takes the body from extremes to the optimum, ideal conditions at which the body is set for the metabolic, biochemical reactions to function properly. Hans Selye describes the tendency of the body to reach the optimum conditions as General Adaptation Syndrome, which occurs in three steps:

- *Alarm reaction:* This is the stage when the fight-or-flight response is generated. The body perceives the external stimuli through the sense organs and conducts them to the organs of the nervous system. Then, the body reacts to adapt to the changing environmental conditions, in other words homeostasis is in progress.
- *Stage of resistance:* It is the longest stage of the syndrome. During this stage the resistance of the body increases to the maximum. The body resists the changes imposed

on it, but its resistance to other stressors can easily fail. This over- resistance can lead to exhaustion.

- *Stage of exhaustion:* This is when the body can no longer maintain the same performance in the adaptation process because the stressor is too strong to resist or the time that the body has been exposed to the stressor becomes too long. Exhaustion and fatigue can be experienced. One or more organs or systems may fail to function properly, which can result in the occurrence of some diseases. These diseases are called psychosomatic diseases, such as ulcers, stroke, heart attacks, immune system diseases or diabetes.

#### 2.5.4 Stressors

When attempting a correct conceptual definition of stress, several elements of this definition should be clarified, such as that stress is not cognitive, but physical. It is the physiological response of the organism to the changing environmental conditions. These environmental agents that trigger stress are called “*stressors*.” In short, the stressor is the cause and the stress is the response.

Stressors are defined as the agents, conditions or events that can be construed as a threat to the well-being of the organism and are capable of provoking a stress response. According to Barling (1990), stressors are grouped into *chronic*, *acute* and *daily stressors*, which are distinguished on the basis of the duration of the stressor, the specificity of its time of onset and its likelihood of recurrence. *Chronic stressors* last a long time, are highly repetitive, and it is usually difficult to specify the exact time of their onset. Conflict related to a person’s social role, job insecurity, conflict between work and family or having a terminally ill child or spouse can be chronic stressors. *Daily stressors* have a specific time of onset, are of short-term duration (no longer than a day) and occur infrequently. Tardiness, conflict with peers or supervisors, losing or misplacing something at work or at home or an argument with a spouse or children can be daily stressors. Lastly, *acute stressors* also have a specific time of onset, and are of short duration (but could be longer than a day) and occur extremely infrequently and have a low likelihood of recurrence. Getting fired, a job change, workplace disaster or death of a close relative like a spouse can be an acute stressor.



Speaking of the later example, losing a spouse affects every aspect of your life and continues to affect you until you've allowed the intricate aspects of grief to take place. A spouse's death is traumatic, and the devastation of the surviving partner manifests itself in many ways; some of these depressive symptoms may be emotionally and physically disabling. Losing a spouse has devastating effects on both the healthy spouse and family network (Catherall, 2004).

As mentioned in Chapter 1, stress is not always a bad thing. It is simply the body's response to changes that create taxing demands.

*Positive stress* has the following characteristics:

- It motivates, focuses energy
- It is short-term
- It is perceived as within our coping abilities
- It feels exciting
- It improves performance

In contrast, *negative stress* has the following characteristics:

- It causes anxiety or concern
- It can be short or long-term
- It is perceived as outside of our coping abilities
- It feels unpleasant
- It decreases performance
- It can lead to mental and physical problems

It is somewhat hard to categorise stressors into objective lists of those that cause positive stress and those that cause negative stress, because different people will have different perceptions and reactions to particular situations. Basically, stress can be divided into two groups: external factors related to the environment, and internal factors intertwined with the personality of the individual. Examples of positive personal stressors might include receiving a promotion at work, starting a new job, getting married, buying a home, having a child, moving, taking or planning a vacation, holiday seasons, retiring, taking educational classes or learning a new hobby. Some of

these stressors may be perceived as negative rather than positive due to the differences in personal conceptions, interpretations and evaluations of a given situation.

However, generally speaking, we can compile a list of stressors that are typically experienced as negative to most people, most of the time. Examples of negative personal stressors can include the death of a partner or a family member, divorce, hospitalisation due to injury or illness, conflict in interpersonal relationships, bankruptcy/financial problems, unemployment, children's problems at school, inadequate housing, excessive job demands and job insecurity, conflicts with colleagues and supervisors, unproductive and time-consuming meetings, commuting and travel schedules, and many others (Klinic Community Health Centre, 2010). However, rather than the stressors of the work domain, family related stress is of concern in this research.

### 2.5.5 Different approaches to stress

There are three different approaches to defining stress and each of these offers a model of stress and related factors. The three approaches are *response-based*, *stimulus-based* and *interactional models* of stress. The *response-based* definition of stress, which is at the basis of this study, has been shown in Figure 1.1. Cox (1983) states that the response-based definition focuses on the specification of the particular response or pattern of responses which may show that the person is, or has been, under pressure from a “disturbance” in the environment.

The table below by Cox (1983) classifies the different effects of stressors on human health.

Table 2.1: The different effects of stressors on human health

<p><i>1. Subjective Effects</i></p> <p>Anxiety, aggression, apathy, boredom, depression, fatigue, frustration, guilt and shame, irritability and bad temper, moodiness, low self-esteem, threat and tension, nervousness and loneliness.</p>	<p><i>2. Behavioural Effects</i></p> <p>Accident proneness, drug taking, emotional outbursts, excessive eating or loss of appetite, excessive drinking and smoking, excitability, impulsive behaviour, impaired speech, nervous laughter, restlessness and trembling.</p>
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<p><i>3. Cognitive Effects</i></p> <p>Inability to make decisions and concentrate, frequent forgetfulness, hypersensitivity to criticism, and mental blocks.</p>	<p><i>4. Physiological Effects</i></p> <p>Increased blood and urine catecholamine and corticosteroids, increased blood glucose level, increased heart rate and blood pressure, dryness of the mouth, sweating, dilation of pupils, difficulty in breathing, hot and cold spells, 'a lump in the throat', numbness and tingling in parts of the limbs.</p>
<p><i>5. Health Effects</i></p> <p>Asthma, amenorrhoea, chest and back pains, coronary heart disease, faintness and dizziness, dyspepsia, frequent urination, headaches and migraine, neuroses, nightmares and insomnia, psychoses, psychosomatic disorders; diabetes mellitus, skin rash, ulcers, loss of sexual interest and weakness.</p>	<p><i>6. Organizational Effects</i></p> <p>Absenteeism, poor industrial relations, poor productivity, high accident and labour turnover rates, poor organisational climate, antagonism at work and job dissatisfaction.</p>

According to Lazarus & Folkman, (1984) stressors, or stressful life experiences, are defined as circumstances that threaten a major goal, including the maintenance of one's physical integrity (physical stressors) or one's psychological well-being (psychological stressors). It is also evident from the table above that stress can affect an individual's physical and mental health and behaviours (Jaramillo, Mulki, Boles, 2011).

Subjective sensations that are reported in relation to stress include headaches, shortness of breath, light-headedness or dizziness, nausea, muscle tension, fatigue, gnawing in the gut, palpitations, loss of appetite or hunger and problems with sleep. Behavioural manifestations of stress commonly reported are crying, smoking, excessive eating, drinking alcohol, fast talking, and trembling. It is also commonplace for people to complain that stress negatively affects their functioning. It impairs their mental concentration, problem solving, decision making, and the ability to get work done in an efficient and effective manner (Lyon, 2012).

Behavioural effects of stress on specifically human relations include becoming less sensitive to others and showing a decrease in helping, decrease in the recognition of individual differences, and increase in aggression (Motowidlo & Packard, 1986). Because humans are social beings, their attitudes and behaviours are significantly influenced by the quality of their interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal problems are a universal human phenomenon that often ranks as a primary source of unhappiness in people's lives (Frone, 2000).

An individual's family situation, such as a squabble or illness of a family member, or a strained relationship with the spouse or one or more of the children, has the capacity to generate stress for employees. Other factors that may contribute to an employee's experience of stress at home include life changes such as a divorce, the general economic situation in the country, facilities at home, social situations, and status, among others (Vogel, 2006). Family relationships are conceptualised as crucial elements that bind individuals to the normative order. Variations in the structure of these relations account for variations in extra-family events, some of which can be held to reflect varying degrees of "anomic" behaviour. The ability to successfully balance the role expectations of work and home life is an on-going matter affecting working individuals. Factors in both the workplace and at home can impede one's ability to effectively balance the role expectations of work and home, creating conflict between these two domains. This happens when the stress from the roles in one of these domains extends into and negatively affects the roles in the other domain. Adverse effects associated with high levels of work-life conflict include increased anxiety and depression. (McBrier, Scott, and Van Gundy, 2003; Ward, 1981).

It is imperative to remember that managers are a dynamic, invigorating element in every business (Sackey, Boahemaa, Sanda, 2011). Cooper & Marshall (1978) classify the sources of managerial stress in several headings and lists *family stress* among extra-organisational sources of stress. The same goes for the school principals in this study.

## **2.6 Family stress**

The concept of *family* was defined in Chapter 1.

The fact is, we are conceived and born in a social system. We grow and develop among other people. We experience crises in relation to events in our social milieu. People around us -

individuals, our families, and community - help or hinder us in the resolution of crises. One's social network may consist of family, friends, neighbours, relatives, fellow workers - in fact anyone with whom a person has regular social intercourse. However, for many the family is the most natural source of support and understanding in times of trouble. At the same time, the family is also very commonly the sphere in which people experience their most acute distress. Stressful events and emergency situations are part of life and have the potential to become a crisis. A family in crisis cannot carry on its normal functions of mutual support and nurturance (Getty & Humphreys, 1981). This can have a profound effect on the functioning of family members outside the home.

### 2.6.1 Conceptual analysis of family stress

As discussed in Chapter 1, Reuben Hill did ground-breaking work on families. The figure below shows his ABC-X theory of family stress.

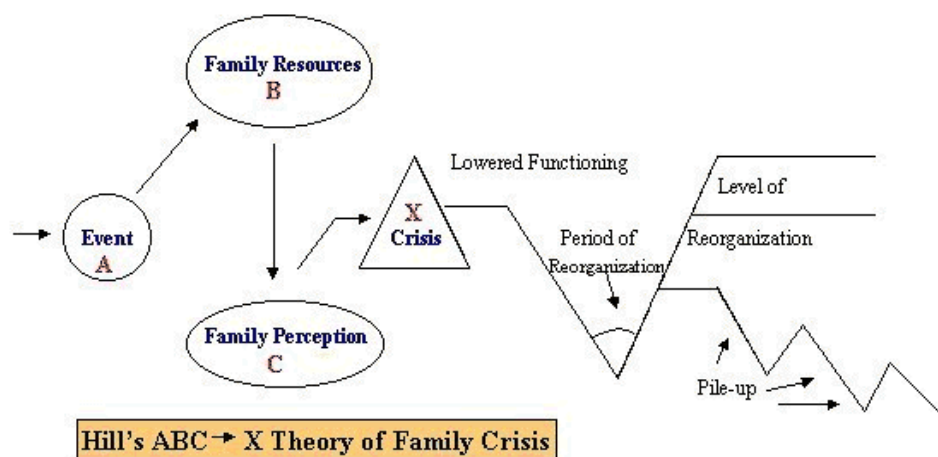


Figure 2.1: Hill's ABC-X Model of Family Crisis

Theorists after Hill, such as McCubbin, refer to this phenomenon as crisis "pile-up", in which additional crisis situations further reduce the family's ability to cope and function.

Family stress comes in many forms. There are *normative stressors*, such as getting married, adjusting to living in a new group, having babies, unemployment, and so on, which are experienced by most families from time to time. There are also *non-normative stressors*, such as famine, war, natural disasters, massive economic collapse, murder, assault, incest, and so on,

which tend to occur in selected families, sometimes at random, sometimes happening to families with special weaknesses. The prudent family member will feel stress, look for the stressor(s), determine whether or not distress or eustress is happening, and make appropriate adjustments in the family system (University of Akron, 2012).

The impact of negative change on the behaviour of family members is markedly influenced by their emotional reactions, which are mediated by their perceptions and appraisals of stressful circumstances. The intensity of these emotional states will be a function of the individual's personality traits and coping skills, as well as the resources of the family as a social system. Thus, emotional states and their consequences are important outcomes in the family stress process. Studies of individual stress have focused primarily on the psychological and emotional well-being of individuals. Similarly, family stress research has been most attentive to individual trait or state variables, such as depression, anxiety, and physical well-being (Hobfoll & Spielberger, 1992). However, little attention has been paid to the impact of family crises and family dynamics at work. Family-work spill over is grossly neglected in research.

## **2.7 Family-work spill over**

Open system theory emphasises the close relationship between a structure and its supporting environments. It begins with the concept of entropy, the assumption that without continued inputs any system soon runs down. One critical basis for identifying and understanding social systems is therefore their relationship with the energy sources that maintain them. For almost all social structures, the most important maintenance source is human effort and motivation (Katz and Kahn, 1978).

According to Katz and Kahn's (1978) "open systems framework", everybody may function in one or more systems, including work and the family, and events, procedures or experiences in one system are more likely to affect those in any other system.

Human effort and motivation has recently been identified as one of the main pre-requisites of the success of an organisation. According to Caligiuri and Givlekian (2012), when employee experiences higher levels of (dis)stress in his or her professional role, his or her personal role will suffer from negative repercussions. Likewise, if an employee experiences above average

stress levels in his or her personal role, his or her professional role will reflect this negative imbalance. A research conducted by Larchick and Chance (2004) on 172 middle school teachers in a south western state in USA showed that family stressors in four different categories namely; family members and relationships, caregiving, health issues and problems and financial management of the family have a ripple effect on all facets of a person's life including the work place. Family-friendly employers understand and support the idea that the most important maintenance source for their employees emanates from the family domain. A proof for this comes from statistical results from the sample comprised of 391 local medical officers working full-time in nineteen public hospitals in Peninsular Malaysia found that spouse support was found to have significant and negative relationship with family interference with work. On the other hand, in the same study it was found that parental demand had significant and positive relationship with the family interference with work (Razak, Omar, Yunus, 2010).

Evidence from the study of Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer and King 2002, on 61 female managers and executives suggests that multiple roles can accumulate in ways that benefit women managers. In the first part of their study, results showed that women see professional benefits from the psycho-logical rewards, social support, and skills acquired through personal roles. In a subsequent quantitative study, they built on these findings by examining the relationships between multiple roles, psychological well-being, and effectiveness at work. Both studies support the role accumulation perspective that multiple roles can be enriching rather than depleting for female executives.

In their study on 420 private sector bank and public sector network of employed professionals in Australia, Haar and Bardoel (2008) concluded that life satisfaction intensified the positive effects of family-work positive spill over towards family satisfaction and increased the buffering effects of family-work positive spill over towards psychological distress. Their findings support the notion that not all work and family experiences are negative and experiences from the work and home can improve outcomes both inside and outside the workplace.

These insights from recent research have brought a new focus on family-work spillover, as discussed in chapter one. Different people handle family stress in different ways, and they take this stress to work in differing degrees. There are differences in how men and women deal with home related stress, as mentioned in chapter one. All of this information just emphasises how

important it has become to consider these variables when addressing the education system. The occurrence of family-work spill over is a real and present fact that is not being addressed. The first step in addressing a problem of this nature is to investigate its extent.

Chapter 3 offers a thorough discussion of the methodology employed in this study to discover the extent to which family-work spill over affects principals.



## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Some recent studies on principalship are aimed at defining a linear direction of relationship that starts with practicing positive interpersonal relations and ends with the students' learning. That is, principals influence the conditions in a school that are associated with student learning-conditions such as setting clear and relevant learning goals, revamping negative school cultures, and establishing an environment of mutual trust and shared relationship (Leithwood, 1994).

In my research I wanted to look at the determinants of principals' positive human relations. Of all the internal and external determinants of practicing positive human relations, I wanted to focus how family functioning (which is in this study referred to as stress of a family origin) affects it.

Many scholars emphasise that work life is not totally separate from home life so that the emotional climate, positive or negative, in one domain can easily spill over from one role to another and affect the satisfaction and success in either of these domains.

In this dissertation, family-related stress refers to problems that require a solution or situations in which the family must adapt in order to maintain the functioning of the family system.

### **3.2 Aims**

This investigation focuses on what the possible influence of the family stress that school principals experience at home is on their human relations at school. Particular issues include the influence of principals as an educational leader on school outcomes, the importance of human relations on staff morale, family stress and family to work spill over.

This dissertation seeks to understand if there is a relationship between stress that originates in the family domain and the interpersonal relationships of principals in the workplace.

### **3.3 Research questions**

The primary research question is as follows:

What is the possible influence of the family stress that school principals experience at home on their human relations at school?

Five secondary questions arise from the primary research question, namely:

- What is the meaning of human relations?
- What is meant by stress related to the family?
- What is the importance of keeping positive human relations in the school environment?
- What does family-work spill over refer to?
- How does gender difference affect the family-work spill over of principals?

In these questions issues of personal and social ‘context’ are central. There is a broad study area about the influence of work on family functioning, called work-family spill over and family-work spill over, which refers to the influence of family experiences on the work place. However, the studies on the former seem to be much broader than the second.

An increasing emphasis on ‘family’ recently drove me to investigate the interaction between the family lives and the interpersonal human relations of principals, as I had the opportunity to work with several principals and could compare their family lives and their human relations.

### **3.4 Research design**

Research design refers to the logical structure of the inquiry. It defines what data is required, from whom, and how it will answer the research question.

Besides serving as an introduction to the research strategy, the purpose of this section is to present the philosophical assumptions behind this research. The epistemological backbone of this research is interpretivist, which implies that the subject matter of social sciences- people and their institutions- is fundamentally different from that of the natural sciences. The study of the social world therefore requires a different logic of research, one that reflects the distinctiveness of humans as against the natural order. It is predicated upon the views that a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences (Bryman, 2000). On the other hand, positivism involves a conviction that the fact that the objects of the social sciences – people - think, have feelings, communicate through language and otherwise,

attribute meaning to their environment, and superficially appear to be uniquely different from one another in terms of their beliefs and personal characteristics, is not an obstacle to the implementation of the scientific method (Bryman, 1990). It is crucial for us to remember the fact that social reality has meaning for human beings and therefore human action is meaningful - that is, it has meaning for people and they act on the basis of the meanings that they attribute to their acts and to the acts of others (Bryman, 2000).

A quantitative research approach primarily follows the confirmatory scientific method in which a researcher states a hypothesis based on an existing theory, then collects data to test the hypothesis empirically. The researcher in the final instance decides tentatively to accept or reject the hypothesis on the basis of data (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). This study is suited to the quantitative approach as a research method to collect data for the study because if time and resources are limited, a quantitative approach may be more appropriate. This is because quantitative research often involves instruments such as surveys and tests to measure specific variables, in this case principals' professional, formal relationships with staff at the workplace. These instruments typically produce useful data in short time periods with a reasonable investment of personnel and materials. A typical quantitative research project identifies and investigates the impact of only a few variables. If access to people who can participate in the research study is limited, a quantitative approach may be preferable as well. This is because quantitative research can often be accomplished with minimal involvement of participants. Finally, a quantitative researcher often seeks to remain blind to the experimental conditions of his/her research to maintain objectivity and to avoid influencing the variables under investigation (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011).

In quantitative research the aim is to determine the relationship between one thing (an independent variable) and another (a dependent or outcome variable) in a population. Quantitative research designs are either descriptive or experimental. A descriptive study establishes associations between variables (Hopkins, 2000). The descriptive research attempts to describe, explain and interpret conditions of the present i.e. "what is". The purpose of a descriptive research design is to examine a phenomenon that is occurring at a specific place and time. Descriptive research is concerned with conditions, practices, structures, differences or

relationships that exist, opinions held, processes that are going on or trends that are evident. Thus, this research falls into the category of descriptive design due to the above definitions.

Correlational research describes an existing relationship between two variables that are studied without any attempt to influence them. It is therefore classified as a type of descriptive method. Correlational research comprises of collecting data to determine whether, and to what extent, a relationship exists between two or more quantifiable variables (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). In this study, this approach is used to determine the nature, degree and the direction of the relationships between family stress and human relations of principals at school.

Researchers are interested in the issue of causation because they want to learn how the world operates and to obtain information about how to make it work better. Experimental research is the strongest method for providing evidence of a causal relationship between two variables; dependent and independent. Sometimes, however, researchers are interested in causality, but they cannot conduct an experiment, either because the independent variable cannot be manipulated or because it would be unethical to manipulate it. In cases like this, one has to use a *non-experimental* research method where the researcher observes how variables relate to one other and must study the world as it is. During such research, the researcher does not have direct control over the independent variable because its manifestations have already occurred or it can inherently not be manipulated (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). This research falls into the category of causal but non-experimental due to the basic outlines of the research methodology. In this study the aim is to suggest causal linkages between the two variables family stress and interpersonal relationships of principals at workplace. The researcher observed that some principals have negative human relations at school. The reason for this difference could lie in experiencing acute home stress.

### **3.4.1 Designing the field work**

This research design builds on other research done on family-work spill over which are listed above in section 2.7 using a quantitative research method. Because this study focuses on a small sample, the idea was to look at interconnected processes or causes and try to quantify principals' behaviour at the work place that result from their experiences at home. The discussion of the methodology that follows below attempts to present some of the specific tools in the form of

questionnaires used to inform the design of the research and the development of an interpretation.

Not all the items of both questionnaires are experienced by each and every respondent. In addition, complex human behaviour is not well captured by quantitative methods. A qualitative method will provide a more in-depth study the variations of complex, human behaviour, but for the purpose of this research a quantitative method will be used to determine what experiences principals are exposed to at home that influence their work.

After finalising the questionnaires, the research design involved applying for the approval of the REC of Humanities Department. REC raised some issues about the ethical considerations of this research such as; the labelling of the research as medium risk research, psychological counsellor who must be referred to the participants, including a section of listing of ethical considerations in the proposal, revising the informed consent form of this research, and removal of any identifier from the questionnaires. Researcher followed all the guidelines listed in the correspondence with the REC to maintain the structure of the questionnaires. This step was followed by informing the principals via a formal authentication letter from the WCED and an introductory letter to describe the process. This correspondence had to be accompanied by a guide that informs the principals about the title of the research and that gives them directions on how to use the questionnaires. They were expected to fill in the two questionnaires attached and to forward it to the researcher before the due date.

The crucial point is that the principals had be persuaded and encouraged to respond honestly to minimise the existence of invalid data. At this point of the study, we preferred to use quantitative method to gather data from the principals so that principals would be more comfortable by being on their own while completing the self-completion questionnaires. Due to the sensitivity of the questions and some ethical issues principal would not be able to prefer speaking in a face to face interview. Going further, we wanted the questionnaires to be anonymous so that principals would have no doubt in their minds about being identified by the researcher. These could be some barriers in receiving valid data from the principals.

Since this study is designed to provide data that can contribute to the physical and psychological well-being of principals, not only at home but also at work, and to positive outcomes at schools

by promoting the staff morale, school principals are expected to spend time and give some reflective responses about their home life and their interpersonal relations at work. If this is achieved, the reliability of the data also increases.

### **3.5 Sample**

#### **3.5.1 Finding and engaging respondents**

Instead of selecting a large number of principals, I selected a group of principals that was easy to access through the WCED. Rescoe (1975), cited by Sekaran and Bougie (2009), proposes the rule of thumb by stating that “sample sizes larger than 30 and less than 500 are appropriate for most research”. Considering these limitations and the possible occurrence of some invalid data, the sample size consisted of maximum of 30 school principals. Once the reliability of the data from this group has been proven, the same questionnaires can be applied provincially or even nationally once the authorities approve it.

To achieve this purpose, I applied to the Research Directorate of Western Cape Education Department and received a response on 13 August 2013. Following this, I specifically targeted the Metro Central Education District of the WCED as these schools are close to me, which allowed me to drive to the schools to pick up the questionnaires and meet the principals. The Metro Central Education District includes 6 circuits, which comes down to 227 schools, 61 of which are high schools, 146 primary schools and 20 special schools. I communicated with the secretary of the District Manager of the MCED electronically to start distributing my questionnaires. On 28 August 2013, I received the letter from the District Manager granting me permission to conduct research amongst the schools in the MCED.

Due to some issues pointed out by the REC of Stellenbosch University, the research was halted until these issues could be resolved. The distribution of questionnaires started in May 2014. I sent the questionnaires electronically to the addresses of the school principals three times, once every ten days. The number of responses received proved to be insufficient, so I telephoned the school principals. After a telephone conversation, I emailed or posted the questionnaires again. I visited some principals to administer the questionnaires myself. Some principals returned the questionnaires via email, post, or fax, or requested me to pick it up.

## **3.6 Measurement**

### **3.6.1 Data collection**

Data collection involved a self-completion questionnaire adapted from two other questionnaires. It comprises mainly two parts: estimating the family stress of principals, which is the independent variable, and human relations at school, which is the dependent variable.

The questionnaire for the former variable is derived from the Family Inventory of Life Events and Changes (FILE) by McCubbin, Patterson, and Wilson (1981). We derived it from another research by Moes, J. L., (1999). It is originally a 71-item, Yes/No checklist that assesses the types of life events that have occurred in the family which we found that those will also be applicable to the family life of principals as well as its high internal consistency. The items asked in the questionnaire have been adapted into our research by asking them to the principals in two cases when they experience daily stress and acute/chronic stress.

The questionnaire for the later variable is derived from the official website of Los Angeles Unified School District the author of which is anonymous. We found that the aspects of human relations asked in this questionnaire are potentially applicable to our sample as well. Thus we decided to utilize it in our research with the same type of adaptation we had for the former variable.

Researchers are concerned about the reliability and validity of their measures. More than anything else, researchers want the information they obtain through the use of an instrument to serve their purposes. In recent years, validity has been defined as referring to the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the specific inferences researchers make based on the data they collect. Reliability refers to the consistency of scores obtained - how consistent are they for each individual from one administration of an instrument to another and from one set of items to another (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). Babbie (2007), on the one hand, describes reliability as matter of whether a particular technique applied repeatedly to the same object yields the same result each time, and on the other hand describes validity as the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration. The first survey deals with estimating the family stress level of principals and was adapted from the Family Inventory of Life Events and Changes (FILE) by McCubbin, Patterson,

and Wilson (1981). It is originally a 71-item, Yes/No checklist that assesses the types of life events that have occurred in the family during the past 12 months. Life events are grouped into nine categories, namely intra-family strains, marital strains, pregnancy/childbearing strains, financial/business strains, work/family transitions and strains, illness and family care strains, losses, transitions, and family legal violations. The instrument has good test-retest reliability over 4 or 5 weeks ( $r = .80$ ,  $N = 150$ ) and good internal consistency on the overall score ( $\alpha = .81$ ,  $N = 1.410$ )

The data for the dependent variable were collected by means of an anonymous survey adapted from the following website:

[http://notebook.lausd.net/portal/page?\\_pageid= 33,153965&\\_dad=ptl&\\_schema=PTL\\_EP](http://notebook.lausd.net/portal/page?_pageid=33,153965&_dad=ptl&_schema=PTL_EP)

### **3.6.2 Gaining access**

One of the biggest problems encountered during the research was to gain access to respondents as they are principals who have busy and hectic schedules during the day. The respondents also felt that they wanted to be private about their family situations.

However, there are methodologies that can help to overcome such problems. Practical problems may include getting principals to respond fairly to the researcher, and getting them to be open, cooperative, and sincere in discussing the family aspects of their lives that interest the researcher. More fundamental for the research methodology is the reliance on responses regarding the personal experiences of the respondents both related to the family and school domains. Participants may either intentionally conceal or mislead the researcher, or unintentionally mislead. In studying someone's private life, it is unlikely that the respondent will be able to comprehensively and thoroughly describe not only their opinions and thoughts, but the details of everyday activities and relationships and the context in which they conduct them.

Methods to eliminate these problems include keeping the participants and the names of their schools anonymous and signing confidentiality form.



### **3.7 Data analysis**

#### **3.7.1 Administering the questionnaires and data analysis**

This research can be described as descriptive as in research in the human sciences a descriptive study can provide information about the naturally occurring health status, behaviour, attitudes or other characteristics of a particular group. Descriptive studies are also conducted to demonstrate associations or relationships between things in the world around you. Descriptive studies, in which the researcher interacts with the participant, may involve surveys or interviews to collect the necessary information ([http://ori.hhs.gov/education/products/sdsu/res\\_des1.htm](http://ori.hhs.gov/education/products/sdsu/res_des1.htm)).

The data analysis and interpretation was performed with the guidance of my supervisor, Prof. Jan Heystek. Computer aids were used to assist with the management and analysis of the mass of questionnaire transcripts.

The questionnaire applied to the school principals in this comprises mostly ordinal variables, as well as the dichotomous type of variables found at the beginning of the questionnaire. The most widely used computer software for statistical analysis, SPSS for Windows, was used to analyse the quantitative data. SPSS, which originally was short for Statistical Package for Social Sciences, has been in existence since the mid-1960's and over the years has undergone many revisions, particularly since the arrival of personal computers. SPSS was selected for two main reasons;

- It is closer to the way in which quantitative data analysis is carried out in real research nowadays.
- It helps to equip the researcher with a useful transferable skill and is relatively straightforward to use (Bryman, 2000).

Chapter 4 presents the research results that emanated from the chosen methodology.

## **CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The findings from the data gathering process and subsequent statistical analyses are presented in this chapter. Previous research on negative spill over from home to the work environment has not been applied to the formal human relations of school principals yet. This chapter presents the statistical analyses of data obtained from 22 school principals in the Metro Central Education District of the Western Cape Education Department of South Africa.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section presents the descriptive statistical analyses of the respondent's answers. The second section presents a summary of the results.

Guided by the previous research on family-work spill over, this study investigated one primary research question, namely:

What is the possible influence of the family stress that school principals experience at home on their human relations at school?

### **4.2 Descriptive Statistics**

Descriptive statistical analyses were conducted to present general quantitative descriptions of the sample. The descriptive statistics provided information on the mean, standard deviation, median, minimum and maximum of the variables for principals.

### **4.3 Sample**

The analysis was based on a sample of 22 principals of public schools in the Metro Central education district in the Western Cape ( $n = 22$ ). The MCED consists of 227 schools; 61 high schools, 146 primary schools and 20 arts or special schools in 6 districts. The principals of each of these 227 schools were contacted via telephone and/or email. Questionnaires and consent forms were mailed to the principals of the forty schools in Circuit 3as they were in the close proximity to the researcher.

However, only 22 of them responded, which can be considered a low response rate. Thirty five principals were contacted telephonically. One principal notified the researcher of his decision not

to not participate, but did not state any reason. Twelve did not return the telephone messages. The researcher contacted one principal in his office by making an appointment and the meeting lasted around 30 minutes. He discussed the purpose, rationale of the study, as well as the questionnaires. The principal's response was quite positive. Principals from the remaining schools did not return email messages. The questionnaires were distributed during March-May 2014.

Again, the completed sample included 22 principals out of 227 available, which comes down to a response rate of 9.7 %. Thus, 205 members of the sample did not participate in the study. It was difficult to say why some members of the sampling frame chose to participate - or why the one who was met in his office was so positive - and why some did not. The nature of the questions in both questionnaires, as well as the time constraints involved in getting hold of 227 principals telephonically were in all probability the most important reasons. MCED is one of the central districts of the WCED, so it is possible that the district may be oversaturated as there are four universities in the vicinity and many postgraduate students conduct research in this area. Even though permission was granted by the district manager, she should also be aware of the vast number of projects running in the MCED.

The following section provides descriptive statistics about the sample, items used for grounding the study, the dependent variables, and the independent variables.

#### **4.4 Family stress of school principals at home**

The first survey is about estimating the family stress level of principals and was adapted from the Family Inventory of Life Events and Changes (FILE) by McCubbin, Patterson, and Wilson (1991).

This part, namely Part 1 is subdivided into 2 parts, 1A and 1B. Subsection 1A identifies daily stressors, whereas subsection 1B identifies acute/chronic stressors that principals may be exposed to.

The frequency of family stress was indicated on a scale of 0-5, where 0 indicates that the principal does not experience much stress at home and 5 indicates that the principal always experiences stress at home.

#### 4.5 The human relations of school principals at the workplace

The next section of questionnaire asked principals to show the extent to which these stressors affect their human relations at school. Subsection 1A identifies how much the daily stressors that the principals are exposed to at home affect their human relations at their workplace, whereas subsection 1B identifies how much the acute/chronic stressors experienced at home affect the human relations of principals at work.

The frequency of human interaction was indicated on a scale of 0-5, where 0 indicates that a specific kind of stress at home does not affect the human relations of principals at school and 5 indicates that such stress at home always affects the human relations of principals at school.

The data for the evaluation of the different aspects of human relations as related to daily stress and acute/chronic stress were gathered in Part 2, which was adapted from a website, as mentioned earlier

The frequency of the different aspects of human relations was indicated on a scale of 1-5, where 1 indicates that the principals almost never behave adversely under the influence of daily or chronic/acute stress, and 5 indicates that the principals always behave adversely under the influence of daily or chronic/acute stress.

#### 4.6 Descriptive statistics

Several items were included to examine the characteristics or demographics of the sample. These items included gender, marital status, number of children, and type of family of each respondent. Table 4.1 below presents the frequencies, percentages, and measures of the main trends of these variables.

Table 4.1: Demographics and characteristics of the sample

Variable Name	Variable Description	Coding	Distribution
Gender	Gender of Respondents	Male: 1	18

		Female: 2	4
Marital Status	Marital Status of Principals	Single : 1 Married: 2 Divorced: 3	0 21 1
Number of Children	Number of Children of Principals	None: 1 1 child: 2 2 children: 3 3 children: 4 4 children: 5 More than 4: 6	2 1 9 7 3 0
Type of Family	Family type of Principals	Nuclear: 1 Extended: 2 Single Parent: 3 Childless: 4	19 1 0 2

As the table indicates, the overwhelming majority of respondents are male (18), married (21), have a nuclear family (19), which is described as *two parents living in the same household with their children who are related to the householder by birth (blood), marriage, or adoption*.

The gender of the respondents was asked as previous research suggests that males and females differ in how they respond to family stressors. We identified 4 female respondents in the sample.

Due to their different roles in the family, women's perceptions of their job performance suffer more than men's from family-to-work spill over. In actual fact, the low response rate of female principals did not enable us to have this generalization that gender as a factor plays a role in family-work spill over.

The number of children was another variable taken into our consideration because the literature review has revealed that married workers with children are more likely to report that their work suffers from family demands than childless workers (Keene & Reynolds, 2005). Previous studies have identified several family demands and resources that are related to home-to-job conflict. For example, having a larger number of children or having young children at home is related to more home-to-job conflict (Dilworth, 2004). Within this few number of female respondents, we identified that the one with the highest number of children which is three (3) reported higher frequency of family-work interference due to the daily family stressors such as; tardiness at home arrangements, losing or misplacing something at home, an argument with spouse or children, small financial strains and acute family stressors like injury or illness of a family member.

As there could be different definitions or perceptions about what a family constitutes, the researcher gave four different categories, namely a nuclear family, extended family, single parent family, and childless family.

Based on the information provided in the literature review, the researcher classified stressors into two categories, namely daily stressors and acute/chronic stressors based on the frequency of the onset, severity, duration, and likelihood of the recurrence of these stressors (Barling, 1990).

#### **4.6.1 The independent variable (daily stressors) and dependent variable (human relations)**

This study has one broad dependent variable, family stress, which is categorised into daily stressors and acute/chronic stressors as the initiators of it.

The analysis of the first part of the questionnaire reveals that although daily stressors have some influence on the interpersonal relationships of the principals at work, it remains a small influence. Of the twelve daily stressors listed in Part 1A of the questionnaires, variable 7, "An

argument with spouse and children” seems the most frequently experienced stressor in the daily life of the principals. The descriptive statistics for this variable is given in the Table 4.2 below;

Table 4.2: Analysis of Variable 7

Variable Name	Variable Description	Coding	Distribution	N
Variable 7	An argument with spouse or children	Never: 0	3	22
		Rarely: 1	6	
		Sometimes: 2	9	
		Often: 3	3	
		Very Often: 4	1	
		Always: 5	0	

The above table shows that thirteen out of twenty two respondents in this sample have arguments with their spouses or children sometimes, often or very often. Variable 7,2, which refers to the spill over of variable 7,1 into a principal’s interpersonal relations, shows that five out of twenty two principals experience difficulties in handling interpersonal relationships in the school domain due to this stressor. It is essential to note that two of these principals experience a spill over of such family issues into his/her relationships at school *often*.

#### **4.6.2 The independent variable (chronic/acute stressors) and dependent variable (human relations)**

In Part 1B of the questionnaires, the respondents were asked to share the frequency of acute/chronic stressors in their lives. Although (and fortunately) these stressors are rarely experienced by the principals, they did reported that such stressors have a more prominent influence on the interpersonal relationships of principals at school.

According to Barling (1990) and Vogel (2006), as mentioned in Chapter 2, having a terminally ill child or spouse can be a chronic stressor and can generate stress for employees. The variable 23 investigates how much/often “increased difficulty in managing a chronically ill or disabled member” pressurises the daily life of the principals. Three principals often or always experience such stress in their lives. In connection with this type of stressor, two of these three respondents experience spill over of this stress *very often* or *always* into their interpersonal relationships at school. Table 4.3 below shows the relevant data.

Table 4.3: Analysis of Variable 23

Variable Name	Variable Description	Coding	Distribution	N
Variable 23	Increased difficulty in managing a chronically ill or disabled member	Never: 0 Rarely: 1 Sometimes: 2 Often: 3 Very Often: 4 Always: 5	11 4 2 0 2 1	20

As mentioned in chapter two by Catherall (2004) death of a spouse is a traumatic life change. Variable 24 examines the stressor “death of your spouse/child” and how often principals experience this kind of stress. One respondent experienced this kind of acute stress in his/her life recently. This principal *always* experienced negative spill over of this unfortunate event which recently took place in his/her life into his interpersonal relationships at work place. Table 4.4 below shows the relevant data.

Table 4.4: Analysis of Variable 24



Variable Name	Variable Description	Coding	Distribution	N
Variable 24	Death of your spouse/child	Never: 0 Rarely: 1 Sometimes: 2 Often: 3 Very Often: 4 Always: 5	19 0 0 0 0 1	20

Variable 25 tests the parallel spill over of these acute/chronic stressors into the interpersonal relations of principals. Two principals in this sample (N=22) experienced “death of spouse’s parent/close relative/family friend”, and they both experienced difficulties in managing their interpersonal relationships at school *often* and *very often*. Table 4.5 below shows the relevant data.

Table 4.5: Analysis of Variable 25

Variable Name	Variable Description	Coding	Distribution	N
Variable 25	Death of spouse’s parent/close relative/family friend	Never: 0 Rarely: 1 Sometimes: 2 Often: 3	8 6 6 1	22

		Very Often: 4	1	
		Always: 5	0	

Many people are not comfortable with death especially when it is somebody who is very close to you; your mother, your father, a family member of you (Catherall, 2004). Variable 26 shows that one of the respondents of this sample (N=22) experienced the “death of his/her own parent/close relative/family friend” recently and the very same respondent experiences spill over this unfortunate event into his interpersonal relationships at work *very often*. The table below shows the relevant data.

Table 4.6: Analysis of Variable 26

Variable Name	Variable Description	Coding	Distribution	N
Variable 26	Death of your own parent/close relative/family friend	Never: 0 Rarely: 1 Sometimes: 2 Often: 3 Very Often: 4 Always: 5	7 8 6 0 1 0	22

The data shows that financial commitments in the family domain can cause stress that can influence the interpersonal relations in the work domain. As mentioned in chapter two by Barling (1990), getting fired, changing jobs, a workplace disaster or the death of a close relative like a spouse can be an acute stressor, because each has direct or indirect financial implications.

Two respondents stated that their family has “purchased or built a major item like car/home” recently and both reported an influence of this event on the interpersonal relationships at school. Table 4.7 below shows the relevant data.

Table 4.7: Analysis of Variable 30

Variable Name	Variable Description	Coding	Distribution	N
Variable 30	Purchased or built a major item like car/home	Never: 0	9	22
		Rarely: 1	7	
		Sometimes: 2	3	
		Often: 3	1	
		Very Often: 4	2	
		Always: 5	0	

Similarly, an analysis of variables 34 and 35 shows that any stress emanating from a family member breaking the law can influence the interpersonal relationships of principals at work. One of the respondents in this sample who experienced “a family member was picked up by police or arrested” reported a negative spill over of this event to his/her interpersonal relations at school. Table 4.8 below shows the relevant data.

Table 4.8: Analysis of Variable 35

Variable Name	Variable Description	Coding	Distribution	N
Variable 35	A family member was picked up by police or	Never: 0	16	19
		Rarely: 1	1	

	arrested	Sometimes: 2	1	
		Often: 3	0	
		Very Often: 4	0	
		Always: 5	1	

Part 2 of questionnaire investigated which aspects of the interpersonal relationships of the principals are influenced by daily stressors and acute/chronic stressors respectively. It revealed a similar situation as in the first part, meaning that more respondents behave more negatively when they are under the influence of acute/chronic stress. The descriptive statistics for this part is given below.

Table 4.9: Analysis of Variable 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, and 56

	When/If I experience daily stress					When/If I experience chronic/acute stress				
	Almo st never	Seld om	Some times	Often	Always	Almo st never	Seld om	Some times	Often	Always
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
<b>37</b> I am <b>open and friendly</b> when meeting new people at work.	0	0	1	11	10	1	3	3	10	5
<b>38</b> I easily accept comments, either positive or negative, from others at my workplace.	0	1	3	12	6	1	3	5	10	3
<b>39</b> I easily admit when I am wrong.	0	1	2	8	11	2	1	4	9	6
<b>40</b> I am patient with people who do things differently from me.	0	2	3	11	6	1	3	8	7	3
<b>41</b> I keep my things in my office a <b>neat and orderly</b> fashion.	0	1	5	10	6	2	2	5	8	5

<b>42I speak well</b> of those around me.	1	0	1	9	10	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	3	8	7
<b>43I communicate</b> my feelings when I am in a difficult situation.	0	3	9	3	7	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	9	4	4
<b>44I</b> can control my temper easily when I am stressed at work.	0	0	4	11	7	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	7	10	3
<b>45I</b> am a <b>good listener</b> to those who I interact with at school.	1	0	0	10	11	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	4	10	4
<b>46I</b> am <b>organized</b> in carrying out my work.	0	0	2	10	10	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	3	12	5
<b>47I</b> make the people around me <b>feel good</b> .	0	0	4	8	9	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	5	7	6
<b>48I</b> willingly <b>obey</b> those who are in a position of authority over me.	1	1	3	7	10	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	4	6	8
<b>49I</b> avoid <b>complaining</b> to others about my problems.	0	2	2	11	7	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	4	11	2
<b>50I</b> try to <b>make the best</b> of a difficult situation.	0	1	1	7	13	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	0	10	8
<b>51I</b> find most people <b>likable</b> .	0	1	3	10	7	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	6	8	4
<b>52I</b> am <b>polite and courteous</b> with others at workplace.	1	0	0	7	14	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	2	8	9
<b>53I</b> make a point of being <b>punctual</b> .	1	0	0	3	18	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	1	3	16
<b>54I</b> am <b>accepting of people</b> who have different beliefs or customs from mine.	1	0	0	5	16	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	0	6	12
<b>55I</b> can disagree with someone in a <b>calm manner</b> .	0	0	2	9	11	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	5	9	6
<b>56I</b> work well with people that I <b>don't particularly like</b> .	0	2	1	14	5	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	2	13	3

Table 2.1 summarizes some physiological effects as well as some behavioural and organizational effects of stress. The figures in the table given in bold show that almost 20% of the respondents reported that the above mentioned aspects of interpersonal relationships are negatively

influenced by acute/chronic stressors originating from the family domain. As mentioned by Jaramillo, Mulki and Boles (2011), stress can affect individual's physical and mental health as well as behaviours. Behavioural effects of stress on specifically human relations counted by Motowidlo & Packard (1986) in chapter two include becoming less sensitive to others and showing a decrease in helping, decrease in the recognition of individual differences, and increase in aggression.

In the light of the statements of above mentioned scholars, we found that the following aspects of human relations, such as *temper control* (Variable 39, 40, 44 and 55), *setting a good example* (Variable 48 and 49), *communication* (Variable 43, 45, 47 and 50), *establishing good relations* (Variable 42, 51, 52, 54 and 56), *openness* (Variable 37 and 38), and *neatness* (Variable 41, 46 and 53), are influenced more negatively by acute/chronic stress than daily stress..

#### **4.7 Summary**

The researcher tried to answer the research question, which was “What is the possible influence of the family stress that school principals experience at home on their human relations at school?” by investigating the effects of daily stressors and acute/chronic stressors separately in two steps.

Firstly, acute/chronic stressors have a more negative influence on the interpersonal relations of the respondents than daily stressors. Although they are not as repetitive as the daily stressors, they have more negative influences. From an inferential point of view, one can say that the minority of the principals in our sample were influenced by family stressors in the home domain or experienced such stressors at all.

Secondly, some behaviours in human relations are affected more than others if the principal is under pressure from acute/chronic family stressors. Evidence for this is that almost 20% of the respondents in our sample suffered to establish *temper control*, *setting a good example*, *communication*, *establishing good relations*, *openness*, and *neatness* in their interpersonal relationships at school when they are influenced by acute/chronic stressors such as the death of a family member, a chronically ill or disabled member, bankruptcy or financial problem and any problem experienced by a family member that involves the law.

Further discussion of research findings is included in the next chapter. In addition, the limitations and strengths of this study will be described, as well as suggestions for future research. Finally, the overall conclusions for this study will be presented.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The study's underlying purpose was to investigate what the possible influence of the family stress that school principals experience at home may be on their human relations at school. As the school principal is the key person who must demonstrate an ability to change the school's climate to one of collaboration, support, and qualities that are more probable in the context of positive relationships for the sake of reaching the educational goals at school (Kowalski, 2010). Previous research has related effective school leadership to significant increases in student achievement (Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2004). This research focused on the factors that can potentially influence the above-mentioned leadership characteristics of the school principal.

The sample population included the school principals in the Metro Central Education District of Western Cape Education Department. Data were collected using survey research methods and data was analysed through quantitative analysis. This chapter initially discusses limitations and strengths related to the research process. This is followed by a discussion of research findings. Following this section, suggestions for future research are provided. Finally, this chapter ends with concluding thoughts on the completed research.

### **5.2 Limitations**

There were several limitations to this study. First of all, there was a low response rate from the school principals (22 out of 227 principals), even though the timing was appropriately set. As the MCED is a central district and easy to access, the principals in this district are often chosen to be the sample of this type of postgraduate studies. Thus, they seem to be frustrated and the majority of the principals did not respond. Future research should draw their samples from other districts. Furthermore, the sensitivity of the theme might also be a reason why principals did not respond as desired. As mentioned before, the sensitivity of the questions due to asking about the stress emanating from home environment and quality of interpersonal relationships at work place might prevent principals from responding to the researcher. Although some precautions had previously been taken like refraining from asking the identities of the principals, principals might be afraid of being identified thus response rate was still low to the questionnaires. There may be another reason of this problem that as mentioned in part 2.3 principal is expected to perform some



administrative, instructional, and managerial tasks as well as exhibiting an effective leadership at school. Principals might feel that failure in establishing positive interpersonal relations with staff members deteriorate their leader vision and identity at school.

Although in connection with the sub-question 5, we tried to understand how gender difference affects the family-work spill over of the principals, we could receive only 4 female principals responded to the questionnaires which was not adequate to be able to make a valid conclusion.

Regarding the methodological approach, a mixed approach that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches could provide the researcher with a better understanding of the research problem. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) argue that integrating methodological approaches strengthens the overall research design as the strengths of one approach offset the weaknesses of the other and can provide more comprehensive and convincing evidence than mono-method studies. In this set of mixed methodology, the researcher could apply the quantitative methodology to detect the participants who experience FWC (family-work conflict). Those participants could then be approached to participate in the qualitative part of the study. Researcher would gain a better understanding of the meanings that participants attach to their behaviour under stressful occasions, how they interpret the stressful family situations, and what their perspectives are on particular problems that influence their behaviours at school. Face-to-face interviews in the work place of school principals may leave them feeling more comfortable, so it could be more effective in gathering data related with the research question.

### **5.3 Discussion of research findings**

This research on school principals primarily focused on the family stress of school principals. It is unique and the first study in South Africa and in the international context to focus on this topic. Although the researchers mentioned in chapter two Larchick & Chance (2004), Haar & Bardoel (2008), Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer & King 2002, and Razak, Omar, & Yunus, 2010 reported both enriching and depleting effects of family-work spill over in different professions such as teachers, managers, medical doctors, this aspect of school principals has not been studied yet. It is therefore an explorative study on this topic that other scholars and researchers might like to take further in the future.

The literature study includes definitions of family-work positive spill over, or enhancement, and negative family-work spill over” or family-work conflict (FWC). Compared to family-work conflict, the inverse work-family conflict has been studied more. Using the same research tool, 170 articles could be found that address family-work conflict, whereas 2163 results address work-family conflict. In addition, work-family and family-work spill over has been related to different professions, such as public accountants (Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw, 2003), nurses (Fujimoto, Kotani & Suzuki, 2008), secondary school athletic trainers (Mazerolle, Pagnotta & Pitney, 2011) and male construction managers (Lingard & Francis, 2004). No study has been conducted on the family-work spill over of school principals. A related, but not identical topic was studied by Yilmaz (2008), namely “organizational commitment and loneliness and life satisfaction levels of school principals”.

There are studies on family-work conflict, but none on the leadership roles of school principals, such as effective human relations. By contributing to the body of knowledge in this area, this research adds significant value in relating the family stress level of school principals to their quality human relations at school. In the first group of stressors namely daily stressors, we identified that the very same principal who experienced increased difficulty in managing children (Variable 12), a child/adolescent member changed to a new school (Variable 13), a family member dropped out of school or was suspended from school (Variable 14), and increased disagreement about a member’s friends or activities (Variable 16) “very often” had poor interpersonal relations at school “often” with other members. In this group of stressors, the most frequently experience stressor was an argument with spouse or children (Variable 7) which affected interpersonal relationships of principals at school domain. In the second group of stressors we had, acute/chronic stressors, when school principals experience the injury of illness of a family member (Variable 22), they experience poor interpersonal relations at school place very often. In another question (Variable 23), we asked principals about their stress when they experience increased difficulty in managing a chronically ill or disabled member. The ones who experience such a stress at home have poor relations with staff at school. One principal who experienced the death of his/her spouse or child (Variable 24) reported poor relations with staff “always”.

As mentioned before, this research on school principals has primarily focused on their family stress. It included measures for the different causes of family stress, such as the death of a partner or a family member, divorce, hospitalisation due to injury or illness, conflict in interpersonal relationships, bankruptcy/financial problems, unemployment, children's problems at school and inadequate housing (Klinic Community Health Centre, 2010). Further research should focus on finding another measure to receive more objective responses regarding the human relations of school principals.

Based on the studies of Keene and Reynolds (2005) and Wallace and Young (2008), women's perceptions of their job performance suffer more than men's from family-to-work spill over due to their different roles in the family. The current study could not generalize the gender differences in the perception of family stress and its influence on the human relations at school domain due to the low response rate of female respondents in the sample. But still some indications could be drawn. Future studies can focus more on this matter.

The researcher classified the stressors in the home domain into two types; daily and chronic/acute and they were investigated separately. As discussed in Chapter 4, acute/chronic stressors, which are more severe, have a more negative influence on the interpersonal relations of the respondents than the daily stressors. *Although they are not as repetitive as the daily stressors, principals report more negative influences of this type of stressors on interpersonal relationships at school according to the comparison of the data between Part 1A and Part 1B of the questionnaire.*

A positive school climate is established by means of positive interpersonal relationships since such relationships reinforce school outcomes such as student learning. Edgerson and Kritsonis (2006) give evidence of this by saying that as the leader of a group of professional, certified teachers and the coordinator of a cadre of classified personnel, the principal establishes important relationships with the staff. These relationships affect student achievement. This phenomenon occurs because teachers who see principals as facilitators, supporters, and reinforcers for the jointly determined school mission, rather than as guiders, directors, and leaders of their own personal agenda, are far more likely to feel personally accountable for student learning. As teachers begin to feel better about themselves and their collective mission as a result of

significant interactions with their principals, they become more effective in the classroom. When positive climates and cultures exist on school campuses, synergy occurs, productivity increases, and students excel. Thus, when the family-work conflict of school principals lead to a negative school climate due to negative interpersonal relationships, poor student learning ensues.

Even though the minority of the principals in the sample is influenced by family stressors or experienced such stressors at all, even a single principal who experiences a spill-over of home conditions to the work place should be investigated carefully.

Part 1A of the questionnaire investigated the effect of daily stressors on the interpersonal relations of principals. Item 7, “An argument with spouse or children”, and Item-9, “Increase in spouse's time away from the family”, are the two most frequent stressors experienced by principals. Of these two, the stress caused by Item 7 spilled over more into the interpersonal relations of principals than that of Item 9.

Part 1B investigated the effect of acute/chronic stressors on the interpersonal relations of school principals. Item 22, “Injury or illness of a family member”, Item 23 “Increased difficulty in managing a chronically ill or disabled member” and Item 30 “Purchased or built a major item like car/home” were the stressors which mostly influenced the interpersonal stress levels at work. Basically home arrangements, hospitalisation and financial factors influence the interpersonal stress levels of principals more than the other factors.

Part2 investigated which behaviours/aspects in human relations are influenced by the family stress of school principals. First of all, a comparison of the daily stressors and acute/chronic stressors shows that the later type influences the different aspects of human relations of principals more than the former type. Secondly, not every aspect of the human relations of school principals is influenced by family stress. According to the findings in Items 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, and 56 temper control, setting a good example, communication, establishing good relations, openness and neatness are influenced negatively by the acute/chronic stress. It was mentioned in part 2.3 that some leadership qualities affect the leadership effectiveness such as neuroticism (anxiety, frustration, moodiness etc.), extraversion (outgoing, and sociable), conscientiousness (greater tenacity and persistence in completing tasks), empowering followers, trust, collaboration, empathy, trust, and

empowerment. We can discuss here that high level neuroticism can potentially let principals struggle in temper control thus affect their human relations with other staff members at school. Extravertedness of principals can be related to the communication, establishing good relations, and openness of the principals. Finally, we can relate conscientiousness of the principals as a leader to their neatness in performing any tasks at school domain based on the previous studies in leadership qualities (Ng, Ang & Chang, 2008; Bartram & Casimir, 2007; Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011).

Edgerson and Kritsonis (2006) also mention that when positive climates and cultures exist on school campuses, synergy occurs, productivity increases, and students excel. Programmes and systems are not the measure of success. Committed and dedicated individuals within systems, engaged in healthy and systemic collaboration as a result of established relationships that operate said programmes are the true measure of success. Failing to accomplish this due to the poor interpersonal relationships emanating from the family work conflict experienced by principals will have influences at both institutional and personal levels, such as poor human relations and poor student learning.

#### **5.4 Directions for future research**

The study found evidence that at an individual level, some principals' interpersonal relations are influenced by their family stress. For instance, participant 18 indicated that he can "almost never" practice the necessary attitudes that should be exhibited in establishing positive human relations at work place. It is almost impossible to expect from this participant to establish a positive school atmosphere, as the correct attitudes should be in place for establishing positive interpersonal relationships at school.

Future research proposals should consider qualitative inquiry in addition to the quantitative methodology as an attempt to gain more in-depth knowledge and a deeper understanding of family stressors of principals and their interpersonal stress level at work. A prolonged interview is recommended to gather more data on especially the home experiences of the school principals. Such an approach may overcome the stumbling block of hesitance to share sensitive information. Even a single case study may offer productive data.

Understanding the gender differences related to the relationship between the dependent and independent variables of this research is also a topic worth studying. The increasing participation of women in workforce, the participation of working mothers, dual earner couples and single parents makes it all the more relevant. This trend has enhanced the child and elder care burden on a large number of employees, which creates new challenges in balancing work and family life (Naithani, 2010).

The marital status of principals can be investigated as the dependent variable in future studies as family arrangements like transport and schooling arrangements of the children are some of the factors listed in the questionnaire that can potentially cause family stress.

Future research endeavours also should consider collecting data from school personnel to examine the reliability of the data received from the principal regarding the human relations at the workplace.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the possible influence of the family stress that school principals experience at home on their human relations at school. The findings of this study suggest that daily stressors are more repetitive, but less influential on the human relations of school principals compared to the acute/chronic stressors.

The findings of this study offer information for a much needed continued dialogue on this topic.

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## APPENDIX 1

### ASSESSMENT OF HUMAN RELATIONS SKILLS OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE FAMILY STRESS LEVELS

**Gender:**    ☐ Male        ☐ Female

**Marital Status:**   ☐ Single        ☐ Married        ☐ Divorced

**Number of Children:**   ☐ 0        ☐ 1        ☐ 2        ☐ 3        ☐ 4        ☐ More than 4

This assessment instrument consists of two parts.

#### PART 1

##### PART 1A:

In this survey, the family can be regarded according to one of the below definitions. Please tick (✓) the definition which defines your family structure the best.

☐ **Nuclear Family** which is defined as *two parents living in the same household with their children who are related to the householder by birth (blood), marriage, or adoption.*

☐ **Extended Family** which is the defined as *structure made up of a community of parents, siblings, grandparents and other relatives such as cousins, aunts, uncles which share the same household.*

☐ **Single Parent Family** in which *there is only one parent in the household raising the children.*

☐ **Childless Family** in which *spouses/partners prefer not to have a child for whatever reason.*

In the table below you will see a list of common daily stressors and a rating for these stressors. According to your own self-evaluation, tick (✓) the choice which defines your “family stress level” the best in your family domain due to these stressors.

Next to your “Family Stress Level”, you will find “Interpersonal Stress Level” which defines how these stressors reflect on your interpersonal relationships at work domain.

Please read the ratings which are defined below carefully and complete the questionnaires which follow.

#### **Rating for Family Stress Level (in the family domain)**

- 0- I never experience such a stress at home; instead it is very supportive to me.
- 1- I rarely experience such a stress at home.
- 2- I sometimes experience such a stress at home.
- 3- I often experience such a stress at home.
- 4- I experience such a stress at home very frequently.
- 5- I always experience such a stress at home.

#### **Rating for Interpersonal Stress Level (at work domain)**

- 0- Such a stress at home never interferes with my personal relationships with my colleagues at school.
- 1- Such a stress at home rarely interferes with my personal relationships with my colleagues at school.
- 2- Such a stress at home sometimes interferes with my personal relationships with my colleagues at school.
- 3- Such a stress at home often interferes with my personal relationships with my colleagues at school.

- 4- Such a stress at home interferes with my personal relationships with my colleagues at school very often.
- 5- Such a stress at home always interferes with my personal relationships with my colleagues at school.

	Family Stress Level						Interpersonal Stress Level					
	0	1	2	3	4	5	0	1	2	3	4	5
Tardiness at home arrangements												
Losing or misplacing something at home												
An argument with spouse or children												
Small financial strains												
Increase in spouse's time away from the family												
A member appears to have emotional problems												
Increase in conflict among children in the family												
Increased difficulty in managing children												
A child/adolescent member changed to a new school												
A family member dropped out of school or was suspended from school												
Increase in the amount of "outside activities" which the children are involved in												
Increased disagreement about a member's friends or activities												
Increased conflict with in-laws or relatives												
<i>Specify any other below if there is/are;</i>												

**PART 1B:**

In the table below you will see a list of chronic/acute stressors which can generate a *high stress response* against and a rating for these stressors. According to your own self-evaluation, tick (✓) the choice which defines your “family stress level” the best in your family domain due to these stressors.

Next to your “Family Stress Level”, you will find “Interpersonal Stress Level” which defines how these stressors reflect on your interpersonal relationships at work domain. Complete it by ticking (✓) into the related box.

**Rating for Family Stress Level (in the family domain)**

- 0- I never experience such a stress at home; instead it is very supportive to me.
- 1- I rarely experience such a stress at home.
- 2- I sometimes experience such a stress at home.
- 3- I often experience such a stress at home.
- 4- I experience such a stress at home very frequently.
- 5- I always experience such a stress at home.

**Rating for Interpersonal Stress Level (at work domain)**

- 0- Such a stress at home never interferes with my personal relationships with my colleagues at school.
- 1- Such a stress at home rarely interferes with my personal relationships with my colleagues at school.
- 2- Such a stress at home sometimes interferes with my personal relationships with my colleagues at school.
- 3- Such a stress at home often interferes with my personal relationships with my colleagues at school.
- 4- Such a stress at home interferes with my personal relationships with my colleagues at school very often.
- 5- Such a stress at home always interferes with my personal relationships with my colleagues at school.

	Family Stress Level						Interpersonal Stress Level					
	0	1	2	3	4	5	0	1	2	3	4	5
Spouse was separated or divorced												
Parent was separated or divorced												
Increased difficulty in resolving issues with a “former” or separated spouse												
Married son or daughter was separated or divorced												
Injury or illness of a family member												
Increased difficulty in managing a chronically ill or disabled member												
Death of your spouse/child												
Death of spouse’s parent/close relative/family friend												
Death of your own parent/close relative/family friend												
Spouse had an unwanted or difficult pregnancy												
A family member had an abortion												
A family member gave birth to or adopted a child												
Purchased or built a major item like car/home												
My own or family bankruptcy												
A family member quit or lost a job												
Family moved to a new home/apartment												
A family member went to jail or juvenile detention												
A family member was picked up by police or arrested												
Physical or sexual abuse or violence in the home on any of the family members												
<i>Specify any other below if there is/are;</i>												

## PART 2

This is an assessment of your skills in relating to other people. For each statement, please tick (✓) the choice from the list below that best describes your usual behaviour with people.

**5= Always      4= Often      3= Sometimes      2= Seldom      1= Almost never**

	When/If I experience daily stress,					When/If I experience chronic/acute stress,				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
I am <b>open and friendly</b> when meeting new people at work domain.										
I easily accept comments, either positive or negative, from others at my workplace.										
I easily admit when I am wrong.										
I am <b>patient</b> with people who do things differently from me.										
I keep my things in my office a neat and orderly fashion.										
I <b>speak well</b> of those around me.										
I <b>communicate</b> my feelings when I am in a difficult situation.										
I can control my <b>temper</b> easily when I am stressed at work.										
I am a <b>good listener</b> to those who I interact at school.										
I am <b>organized</b> in carrying out my work.										

I make the people around me <b>feel good</b> .										
I willingly <b>obey</b> those who are in a position of authority over me.										
I avoid <b>complaining</b> to others about my problems.										
I try to <b>make the best</b> of a difficult situation.										
I find most <b>people likable</b> .										
I am <b>polite and courteous</b> with others at workplace.										
I make a point of being punctual.										
I am <b>accepting of people</b> who have different beliefs or customs from mine.										
I can disagree with someone in a <b>calm manner</b> .										
I work well with people that I don't particularly like.										